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ABSTRACT

Because of the vast nature of the work of Ernest Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, it is appropriate to highlight specific ideas related to the basic course in communication and offer a response. First, further research must be done to determine the extent to which the basic communications course enhances student skills. Second, communication scholars have allowed the importance of their discipline to decrease in the perceptions of their colleagues and students; scholars must emphasize the importance of speech in all disciplines. Third, communication scholars have not required students to develop critical insights into contemporary problems. Fourth, there is little research done to support the teaching of basic communication courses. Fifth, communications scholars have been negligent in taking their ideas to other disciplines. Sixth, communication scholars should do more to teach with advancement of knowledge as a goal in the basic communications course. Seventh, communication scholars must rely less on graduate student assistants in the teaching of the basic course. Eighth, communication scholars must do more to reward innovative approaches to teaching speech. Ninth, applying what scholars know about communication practice and theory should be the goal of all communication educators, especially those involved in the basic course. (TB)

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THE BOYER COMMISSION REPORT:

IMPLICATIONS IN THE BASIC COURSE

by

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The Boyer Commission Report:

Implications in the Basic Course

This paper will not be a traditional paper which develops information centering around a central theme. Because of the vast nature of the work of Ernest Boyer and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, it seems appropriate to highlight specific ideas related to the basic course in communication and offer a response. As a result, quotations from the writings of Ernest Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation will be highlighted (bolded) and commentary offered as specific ideas relate to the basic courses in communication.

To gain an insight into Boyer's and the Commission's writings it is helpful to see how consistently they perceive the importance of oral communication education in higher education. "We propose that all students, from the very first years of formal schooling, learn not only to 'read and write,' but also to read with understanding, write with clarity, **and listen and speak effectively**" [emphasis mine] (Quest for Common Learning, p. 36). Let's continue this emphasis on communication skills.

1] **"The foundation for a successful undergraduate experience is proficiency in the written and spoken word. Students need language to grasp and express effectively feelings and ideas. . . . Still, the reality is that students will not be adequately prepared for American life if they cannot communicate effectively in English. The**

lack of this skill constitutes a formidable barrier that will severely limit a student's educational, social, and vocational options" (The Undergraduate Experience, p. 73).

No one in communication education will likely disagree with this point of view. Everything printed in our journals, and journals of related organizations, emphasize the importance of writing and speaking effectively while on the job.

A point to consider is the results of our efforts. For example, although we pride ourselves on teaching students in the basic course communication skills, evaluate their performances, and believing we do a "good" job in this one-course opportunity, what proof is there at all that we make a difference in the individual student's communication skill development? Little if any proof related directly to improved communication skill performance based on the basic communication course. Before we over-react to this observation, let's consider the plight of our colleagues teaching writing skills. First, they have access to students much longer than we do. Second, there are more specified rules to govern written communication than oral communication. Third, we have all worked with students whose writing skills are weak at best -- and this after 12 years of instruction in writing.

We all want students to take an oral communication performance course. Accrediting agencies in many representing professional organizations demand student take at least one oral communication course. It is not clear they know if we make students better communicators or not. Having students merely take a course is

insufficient if attempting to suggest students are better communicators after the course than they were when the entered the course.

Some of my basic course colleagues might view this as hypocrisy; but it is a serious question that calls for research to assess our impact in beginning instruction in the basic course.

2] **"In recent years the value of disciplined oral discourse has declined. At a leading private university in the Southeast, three fourths of the students in a senior course agreed that they could have completed a baccalaureate program at the institution without having ever spoken in class. It should be remembered that we speak more than we write. Throughout our lives we judge others, and we ourselves are judged, by what we say and how we speak. The information age raises to new levels of urgency the need for all students to be proficient in the use of the spoken as well as the written word" (The Undergraduate Experience, p. 81).**

There is no one to blame for this observation than ourselves as communication educators. We have let the pragmatic importance of our discipline decrease in the perceptions of our colleagues and students. A major reason for this is the ongoing search for identity within the discipline. Are we organizational communication specialists? Are we rhetorical criticism specialists? Are we mass media specialists? Are we small group communication specialists? Are we communication theory specialists?

Are we specialists in the psychology of communication? Are we specialists in the sociology of communication? Are we specialists in the history of communication? Are we interpersonal relationship specialists? Are we public speaking specialists?

Perhaps we should return to the roots of the discipline and invigorate an emphasis on communication skills. This is our history. This is our discipline. As communication educators, we should take the responsibility for making courses in communication performance the most important and exciting ones on campus. I dare say, we haven't done this. Although we should have started decades ago, perhaps its not too late to take on the role of "communication-missionary" to advocate our importance as a central element of education and educate the unconverted to require students to speak in their classes. All it will take is a little prodding. If we succeed, our discipline succeeds in moving center stage in the academy.

If we succeed our basic courses will boom with enrollment. Students will be required to enroll in our courses -- not because it is one of a series of "required" courses; but because they will need the skills we teach to do well in biology, economics, history, anthropology, and a lengthy list of other courses. I have had nightmares about finding myself in a situation of agreeing with Jim McCroskey; but here I am. At many basic course meetings, McCroskey has said time and time again, the best thing to happen to the basic communication course at West Virginia University is having it dropped as a requirement. This meant students took the course because of the immediate and long-term value in the course.

3] **"In the end, the quality of the undergraduate experience is to be measured by the willingness of graduates to be socially and civically engaged. . . . Clearly, the college graduate has civic obligations to fulfill. There is urgent need in American teaching to help close the dangerous and growing gap between public policy and public understanding. The information required to think constructively about the agenda of government seems increasingly beyond our grasp. It is no longer possible, many argue, to resolve complex public issues through citizen participation. How, they ask, can nonspecialists debate policy choices of consequence when they do not even know the language? . . . For those who care about government 'by the people,' the decline in public understanding cannot go unchallenged. In a world where human survival is at stake, ignorance is not an acceptable alternative. The full control of policy by specialists with limited perspectives is not tolerable. Unless we find better ways to educate ourselves, as citizens, unless hard questions are asked and satisfactory answers are offered, we run the risk of making critical decisions, not on the basis of what we know, but on the basis of blind faith in one or another set of professed experts"** (The Undergraduate Experience, pp. 278-280).

In the area of citizenship, communication educators have failed in a fundamental challenge. We have failed because we have not taught our students to think critically or develop critical insights into the contemporary problems facing our society. Too often, students give speeches on topics with little significance; or when they select a topic of

significance, they fail to gain clear insights into the issue. As a result, students who exit the beginning communication course are poorly equipped to think about, much less talk about, the significant problems in our society and our world. Isocrates demanded his students to talk on issues or problems of consequence. Our discipline has failed miserably in making the same demands for our students.

We need to rethink our assignments in the basic communication course to reflect our dedication to making our students "good citizens". Textbook after textbook, instructor after instructor, course after course have failed in developing a sense of civic responsibility. We have failed in helping students be educated participants in the democracy we cherish so much. We have failed because we have rewarded, if not expected, student performances using topics with little significance in today's world. The challenge has been there for over two centuries -- we must pick up the banner and demand more from our students. However, this must start with a commitment from the faculty to make the process of developing educated thought on issues a core objective of basic communication courses.

4] "What we have now is a more restricted view of scholarship, one that limits it to a hierarchy of functions. basic research has come to be viewed as the first and essential form of scholarly activity, with other functions flowing from it. Scholars are academics who conduct research, publish, and then perhaps convey their knowledge to students or apply what they have learned. The latter functions grow

out of scholarship, they are not to be considered a part of it" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 15).

This is certainly a reflection of what we know through research about what occurs in the basic communication course. John Daly, during the recent SCA summer conference on communication assessment, pointed out that there is little research foundation to support the way we teach oral communication skills to our students. I might even go as far as to say that we do not publish research that suggests that the basic course accomplishes anything, or at least very little different from what we know from Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Quintillian. This is a sad commentary on the position of the basic course in the discipline -- a necessary evil to support the other kinds of research and teaching faculty would really like to do. Basic communication courses generate high levels of student enrollments to generate sufficient income to support graduate and undergraduate programs. Income generated by basic courses give faculty opportunity to do research (of whatever kind) and not teach.

There are multiple research opportunities for faculty interested in the basic course to confirm our teaching. However, when we see reference to the basic communication courses in research articles, it is usually in reference to using students enrolled in the basic courses as subjects for other kinds of research. This, in my opinion, is the lowest form of research to be associated with the basic course. Research on teaching approaches is a natural form of research to be conducted in the basic course. There are so many approaches to teaching the basic course -- ranging from lecture to lecture-

discussion to undergraduate teaching assistants. With rare exception, research on the effectiveness of these styles in the basic communication course is non-existent. As a result, basic course directors make assertion after assertion that the approach they use on their campus is the "best" approach to communication education with little, if any, research to support their point of view. Their approach may very well be the best -- after all, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy -- "I know what I do is the best way to teach communication skills in the basic communication course." For example, how do we know that lectures are the best way to deliver information in the basic communication course? Under what circumstances is the lecture the most effective method and in what situations is it the best way to deliver information about communication in the basic course?

Where is the research to support what we do?

5] "How then should we proceed? Is it possible to define the work of faculty in ways that reflect more realistically the full range of academic and civic mandates? We believe the time has come to move beyond the tired old 'teaching versus research' debate and give the familiar and honorable term 'scholarship' a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the fill scope of academic work. Surely, scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one's investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one's knowledge effectively to students. Specifically, we conclude that the work of

the professoriate might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping, functions. These are: The scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching " (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 16).

There is tremendous pressure exerted on faculty to conduct research -- more specifically, to publish. It is the fault of the faculty involved in the basic communication course that the importance of research on teaching has not been raised to a higher plane. It is our fault that research on teaching has not been viewed on a par with other forms or research. In fact, it is no wonder that at many colleges and universities, writing a textbook does not count as research -- there is no research in it.

Let's explore each of the our types of research outlined above separately.

5a] "The scholarship of discovery, at its best, contributes not only to the stock of human knowledge but also to the intellectual climate of a college or university. Not just outcomes, but the process, and especially the passion, giving meaning to the effort. The advancement of knowledge can generate an almost palpable excitement in the live of an educational institution" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 17).

The "advancement of knowledge" at the root of research? When was the last

research study you read that offered some advancement of knowledge in the area of basic communication instruction? The problem is we have a lot to offer the discipline and the academy of scholars; we just choose not to take up the challenge.

Faculty actively involved in basic communication courses are positioned to have tremendous impact on the communication of the future. We are the ones training students to be better communicators. We are the ones who have opted not to make these contributions. Instead, we rely on rhetorical principles from ancient Greece and Rome as our guiding tenants. With new emphasis on communication competence and communication assessment, we are at the starting blocks of a long race. We have three choices: (1) we can quit the race and keep doing things the way we have been doing things in the basic course; (2) we can run with the pack in some form and plod along reacting to developments in other disciplines or research; or (3) we can lead the pack and make significant contributions to the development of communication education, specifically, basic communication skills, in the future. The choice is ours -- each day we wait, we risk the opportunity to lead.

5b] "In proposing the scholarship of integration, we underscore the need for scholars who give meaning to isolated facts, putting them in perspective. By integration, we mean making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialists in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating the nonspecialists, too. In calling for a scholarship of integration, we do not suggest

> **returning to the 'gentleman scholar' of an earlier time, nor do we have in mind the dilettante. Rather, what we mean is serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research. . . . The scholarship of integration also means interpretation, fitting one's own research -- or the research of others -- into larger intellectual patterns"** (Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 18-19).

This is the research domain where scholars interested in the basic communication course have been the most successful. We have taken from other disciplines and adapted practices and research to our instructional activities. A prime example is the adaptation of the Personalized System of Instruction (PSI) to the basic communication course.

However, we also have been negligent in taking our ideas to other disciplines. One movement to export our information, our instructional strategies, our research results is the attempt to develop programs in speaking-across-the-curriculum. In these efforts, communication educators are taking their knowledge and expertise and teaching others, at a rudimentary level, how to talk about and assess communication in their classrooms. This is a step in the right direction -- but it is certainly insufficient. There is much more to our discipline than teaching oral communication skills. (This is true in spite of many administrators' beliefs that all communication people can do is teach speechmaking.) Our research and expertise should be the life-blood of any college or university. Communication skills form the center of academic life: teaching, interacting

with students, sharing our research with others, etc. (In fact, our own scholars have a great deal to learn in terms of sharing their results with others at these conferences. Our own colleagues sit and read their manuscripts during their sessions -- WHAT A COMMUNICATION SKILL! How would we react in our classrooms if our students in a beginning public speaking class adopted this delivery style. Does the word "ballistic" ring a bell?)

5c] **". . . the application of knowledge, moves towards engagement as a scholar asks, 'How can knowledge be responsively applied to consequential problems? How can it be helpful to individuals as well as institutions?' And further, 'Can social problems themselves define an agenda for scholarly investigation. . . . Given this tradition, one is struck by the gap in the academy and the needs of the larger world. Service is routinely praised, but accorded little attention -- even in programs where it is most appropriate. . . . Colleges and universities have recently rejected service as serious scholarship, partly because its meaning is so vague and often disconnected from serious intellectual work" (Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 21-22).**

Few other disciplines can offer to the larger community more than the communication discipline. Yet what do we offer? Not much. Our research typically chases the obscure; with little regard for a broader application. Communication

educators must, like other members of the academy, publish or perish. This reality remains the guiding principle in tenure and promotion decisions on many campuses today.

For example, some of the most important communication areas receive the least research attention. With the growth of psychological interventions into our lives -- whether as children, parents or grandparents; little research has been done to investigate the role effective communication plays in these encounters. Sure, we have talked about the importance of good communication skills for counselors; but have we developed a broader application of research in counseling or psychotherapy? A second example, is relational communication. Communication scholars know a lot about interpersonal communication. Do we disseminate these data beyond the course in interpersonal communication or the unit on interpersonal communication in some of our courses?

As communication professionals, we need to make contributions to the larger community about communication. In addition, we need to campaign to make these kinds of research important during faculty decisions on tenure and promotion. Faculty in basic communication courses are positioned well to offer significant service to the larger community because of their involvement with communication skills. We need to rethink the role of the basic course to become preeminent in the development and training of students with the communication skills they will need as citizens in our society. For example, are public speaking skills the essential communication skills we want students to leave the basic course knowing? There is much more -- so much more -- we can offer than adhering to the assumption that the skills we teach in public speaking are applicable

to other communication situations. Where's the proof?

As communication educators, we need to rethink the role to be played by basic communication instruction in the larger community. If we do this, there will be opportunities for communication scholars to engage in the scholarship of service in the larger community in an ongoing relationship.

5d] "Finally, we come to the scholarship of teaching. The work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others. Yet today, teaching is often viewed as a routine function, tacked on, something almost anyone can do. When defined as scholarship, however, teaching both educates and entices future scholars. . . . As a scholarly enterprise, teaching begins with what the teacher knows. Those who teach must, above all, be well informed, and steeped in the knowledge of their fields. Teaching can be well regarded only as professors are widely read and intellectually engaged. . . . Further, good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners. All too often, teachers transmit information that students are expected to memorize and then, perhaps, recall. While well-prepared lectures surely have a place, teaching, at its best, means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well. Through reading, through classroom discussions, and surely through comments and questions posed by students, professors themselves will be pushed in creative new directions. In the end, inspired teaching keeps the flame of scholarship alive"

(Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 23-24).

It seems appropriate to expand the Commission's view of the **scholarship of teaching** to include research on the communication act of teaching. No one would argue seriously against the proposition that good teaching goes hand-in-hand with scholarship. However, there is, as noted above, little research on the act of teaching. There are some studies that study teaching format and teacher style that are a beginning. Communication educators must get serious about the communication act of teaching and all its potential tendrils. There are mountains of research to be done in examining teaching as a communication act. The problem is little of this kind of research is done. Perhaps one of the reasons is that research on teaching really is looked down upon when faculty and administrators compare it with "pure" research (whatever that is).

6] **"First, all faculty should establish their credentials as researchers. . . . Second, all members of the faculty should, throughout their professional careers, stay in touch with developments in their fields and remain professionally alive. But we also underscore the point that this might be accomplished in different ways. . . . As a third mandate, every faculty must be held to the highest standards of integrity. . . . Fourth, the work of the professoriate -- regardless of the form it takes -- must be carefully assessed. Excellence is the yardstick by which all scholarship must be measured. Effective ways surely must be found to evaluate**

faculty performance in the four dimensions of scholarship we discuss in this report, as difficult as the process may be" (Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 27-28).

As a communication educator dedicated to the basic communication course, I find no better place for a faculty member to find him or herself to meet these four challenges offered by the Commission than in the basic course. There are so many opportunities for teaching and scholarship excellence in the basic communication courses. There are several challenges we face in making these opportunities viable in communication departments.

First, we must insist that the best faculty teach the basic communication course -- and reward their efforts. Each communication department must make a commitment of full service faculty to the basic course. Each communication faculty member **should** teach one section of the basic course each term -- with rare exception. We can no longer settle for the over-reliance on graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) to do the bulk of the teaching in these courses. With rare exception, they know little about the communication discipline and know even less about the prospect of teaching. So even if the GTAs are evaluated for their efforts in the classroom, we certainly can't expect them to do well.

Second, communication educators must rethink the role of research and their contributions to the academy. Scholarship on instructional delivery systems, course content, and teaching are important, if not the most important, forms of research. This is especially true for those of us deeply involved in the basic communication course.

Third, teaching must be rewarded as research is. In spite of all the empty talk about minimizing the importance of scholarship and getting faculty back in the classroom, reward systems at many college and universities remain heavily weighted towards research and scholarship. Even within these categories, the emphasis is on "pure" or "basic" research and not the kinds of research that those of us involved in the basic course could do to improve teaching or course content. The dichotonomy between teaching and scholarship remains; although publicly administrators pay lip service to improving the quality of teaching and getting their faculty back in the classroom.

7] **"Part-time teachers are beneficial economically and can enrich the campus. . . . It is our position that a balance must be struck between full- and part-time faculty. Specifically, we propose that no more than 20 percent of the undergraduate faculty be part time and that when part-time faculty are used, it is essential that their employment be educationally justified"** (The Undergraduate Experience, **p. 137).**

It would seem appropriate to take this 20 percent figure and apply it to basic course programs. I doubt there are many basic course programs that can boast only 20 percent of the instruction in these courses is carried out by part-time faculty (especially if we count graduate teaching assistants as part of the population who are not full-time faculty).

To be more realistic, the problem hinges on the practice of having the least qualified instructors take the burden of teaching the basic communication course. As mentioned above, oral communication skill training should be moved to the center of the discipline. It should not be viewed as an "add-on" or something that full-time faculty teach when other courses are not available. Many of us are products of academic departments where one full-time faculty member "supervises" the basic course; and the course is taught, if not exclusively, almost exclusively by part-faculty or graduate teaching assistants.

Our discipline, department-by-department, needs to re-prioritize the role of the basic course in our students' lives. If we agree it is a central skill (like reading or mathematics), then lets treat it like one and put our most qualified instructors in these classrooms.

8] "What about <u>applied</u> research? Today, almost all colleges and universities say that faculty should engage in teaching, research, <u>and</u> service, but when it comes to tenure and promotion, the latter often is forgotten, Since such oversight restricts both the utility and the creativity of higher education, ways must be found to assure that professional service is taken seriously. Means are needed to document such activity, and evaluate it. We stress again, however, that service is not a 'catch all' category. While social and civic projects are important, they should not be considered a part of the scholarship of application. What <u>should</u>

be included are activities that relate directly to the intellectual work of the professor and carried out through consultation, technical assistance, policy analysis, program evaluation, and the like" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 36).

What better place for direct application of scholarship to our professional and research interests than the basic communication course. There are multiple opportunities for scholarship -- as noted previously. Scholarship in the basic course can, and should, emphasize teaching and application. Keeping in sight the focus of the basic communication course as a skill development program, we must research the ways we teach and what we teach. We should keep an eye on creative ways to teach communication and make linkages to students' lives. We should look creatively to improve the "what we teach" in the basic communication courses.

A central question is the propriety of teaching many of our communication skills, especially public speaking, the way they were taught in ancient Greece and Rome. Related questions awaiting scholarly responses center on the best orientation for teaching communication skills to adopt in the basic course (interpersonal, group, public speaking, theory, hybrid), the best approach for long-lasting effects on the students in their personal and professional lives, and the best delivery system for skill development. A follow up scholarly area would focus on the students' retention of the skills we teach, reinforce and assess in the basic communication course.

9] **"At the research university, original research and publication should remain the basic expectations and be considered the key criteria by which the performance of most faculty is assessed. Where else but in our major research universities -- with their intellectual and physical resources and their tradition of rigorous and untrammeled inquiry -- should the bulk of research in a free society be conducted and rewarded? . . . But at research centers, the integration and application of knowledge should be valued. . . . Research universities also must aggressively support teaching. . . . To expect faculty to be good teachers, as well as good researchers, is to set a demanding standard. Still, it is at the research university, more than any other, where the two must come together" (Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 57-58).**

Merging teaching and scholarship is important. There is an important question in this quotation related to the propriety of expecting excellent teachers to be excellent researchers or excellent researchers to be excellent teachers at the same time. Many research institutions have basic communication courses. If faculty are devoting time and energies in directing and/or teaching the basic course, it is not fair to expect them to be excellent researchers, too.

Let's look at what the Commission indicated the role of other types of institutions in higher education to be.

9a] "At doctorate-granting universities a different approach to scholarship is needed. These institutions typically see themselves as being 'in transition.' embracing to a very large degree the research model. . . . However, doctorate-granting institutions need also to recognize professors who make exceptional contributions to other scholarly areas: integration, application, and teaching. At these institutions, perhaps more than any other, the mosaic of talent should be carefully considered" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 58).

These are the institutions many of us teaching and directing in the basic communication course graduated from. We are products of these institutions and their over-reliance on the graduate teaching assistant (GTA). The apprenticeship we served in pursuit of our degrees helped (or hindered) our current perspectives of instruction in the basic course. Too often, faculty at these institutions are evaluated using the same emphasis that research institutions apply to research. Maybe these doctorate-granting institutions are research institution "wanna-be's" and that causes the problems. The doctorate-granting institutions, above all others, should be dedicated to teaching because they shape the future of the teaching profession in higher education. The basic course programs at these institutions should be the breeding ground for excellent teachers. These programs should reward faculty for making contributions to the knowledge and scholarship of teaching. GTAs should be taught how to teach at these institutions -- and I mean more than a two week training program and periodic meetings. "Graduate education also should be more attentive to the scholarship of application. . . . Sill,

future scholars should be asked to think of the usefulness of knowledge, to reflect on the social consequences of their work, and in so doing gain understanding of how their own study relates to the world beyond the campus" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 69).

9b] "Liberal arts colleges have, historically, taken pride in the scholarship of teaching. Faculty on these campuses frequently are hired with the understanding that spending time with students, both inside and outside the classroom, is of prime importance. It seems clear that teaching undergraduates should continue to be viewed as the measure of success for liberal arts colleges. And professors at these schools should be assured, in unequivocal terms, that rewards will be based heavily on such work. . . . On these campuses, there is, or should be, a climate of intellectual exchange that fosters interdisciplinary studies, creative general education courses, and capstone seminars" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 59).

Rewarding creative approaches to teaching oral communication skills is an important ingredient to successful and vibrant programs. Promoting interdisciplinary approaches to teaching oral communication skills creates essential linkages between communication practice and other disciplines. Being a dedicated teacher in the basic course should be rewarded. The model of rewarding the instructor's efforts at teaching and/or directing basic courses should be applied on all college campuses. Telling a faculty member her or his job is to direct the basic course and offering some release time

(load reduction) is only a beginning of creating the correct reward system for faculty involved in basic communication course administration and/or instruction. "Graduate students, in preparing to teach, also might be asked to work with mentors -- veteran faculty who have distinguished themselves by the quality of their instruction [basic course directors, perhaps]. . . . In higher education, a close and continuing relationship between a graduate teaching assistant and a gifted teacher can be an enriching experience for both. The observations, consultations, and discussions about the nature of teaching surely would help foster critical inquiry into good practice" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 72).

Rewarding ways to tie basic communication instruction and communication skill development into a capstone seminar is important. It reinforces to the students, faculty (in and out of the communication department), and administrators the importance of the service we provide in our basic courses.

9c] "Community colleges also have teaching as a central mission. . . . But here again, community college professors surely will extend their work beyond teaching and thereby enrich their work with students. Currently, about two-thirds of all community college students are enrolled in career and technical programs, so it seems reasonable to suggest that the application of knowledge would be an especially appropriate emphasis. Further, faculty on these campuses also might devote time to integrative studies, and while neither the teaching load nor

facilities readily support research, this too may be found occasionally on a community college campus -- especially research about teaching and learning, with special emphasis on diversity in the classroom" (Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 60-61).

Applying what we know about communication theory and practice should be the goal of all communication educators -- especially those of us involved in the basic communication course. It is not only appropriate to the community college communication course because their students are involved in "career or technical" programs. Each student in each section of a basic communication course has special needs, special needs, and a specialized career. As communication educators, we should be able to make direct application to all programs of study. This is not the main mission or in the main purview of the professor at the community college. IT IS THE CHALLENGE WE ALL FACE IN THE BASIC COMMUNICATION COURSE!

9d] "The comprehensive college or university, perhaps more than any other, can benefit most from a redefinition of scholarship. . . . What we urgently need are models for the comprehensive institutions, distinctive programs and priorities that give distinctiveness to the mission and are not purposely imitative of others" (Scholarship Reconsidered, pp. 61-62).

One of my biggest criticisms of basic communication instruction across the country is the "same-ness" the programs exhibit. Listen in on directors or instructors in basic courses from different institutions from different parts of the country and there is such a commonality of approach that the two people could change institutions and not really notice a significant differences. I quickly recognize there are programs that are significantly different that the "norm". I am also quick to recognize there are differences in some of the units taught in courses at different institutions.

However, I am also quick to point out the problems associated with this "same-ness". It has bred or breeds the phenomena of being insensitive to local cultural or political situations. For example, the very Westernized way of thinking does not automatically apply at institutions with a large Asian American or Hispanic American or African American population. We need to do better as communication educators. We need to be leaders in not only teaching appreciation of diversity but in showing the communication discipline is sensitive to diversity. In other words, we need to practice what we preach.

10] "But professors, to be fully effective, cannot work continuously in isolation. It is toward a <u>shared</u> vision of intellectual and social possibilities -- a community of scholars -- that the four dimensions of academic endeavor should lead. In the end, scholarship at its best should bring faculty together. A campuswide, collaborative effort around teaching would be mutually enriching. A similar case

can be made for cooperative research, as investigators talk increasingly about 'networks of knowledge,' even as individual creativity is recognized and affirmed. Integrative work, by its very definition, cuts across the disciplines. And in the application of knowledge, the complex social and economic and political problems of our time increasingly require a team approach" (Scholarship Reconsidered, p. 80).

No discipline, no discipline is better equipped to build collaborative approaches to teaching, scholarship, and service than communication. Because of the nature of the students taking the beginning communication course, there is no better place than in the basic course to begin this integration and collaboration. Yet, we have spent the past several decades attempting to demonstrate how different the communication discipline is from other disciplines. Perhaps this is the wrong approach; perhaps we should be building our identity on the fact that our discipline incorporates all other disciplines. We serve as an umbrella discipline for all others. Stephen Toulmin suggested this point about a decade ago during a Speech Communication Association conference. He stated that the strength of the communication discipline is its ability to transcend discipline boundaries. The basic communication course is a place to demonstrate this orientation. So instead of arguing how different we are -- it is the time to highlight how we can benefit everyone regardless of discipline, orientation or approach.

Future Challenge

In his new book, due to be released this fall, Boyer challenges higher education on the issue of faculty evaluation. Magner writes, "The new report . . . will outline four major principles that should guide the evaluation of faculty work:

- Faculty evaluation should focus initially not on the standards or procedures of assessment, but on professional characteristics of the scholar, such as honesty, persistence, and courage.
- The evaluation of scholarly work can be successfully accomplished only if academe has agreed upon standards of faculty performance.
- The evidence of a scholar's research, teaching, and outside activities, must be 'broad and rich and varied,' including self-evaluation, peer review, and student opinions.
- Faculty members must have confidence in the evaluation process"

(The Chronicle of Higher Education, p. A22).

This new book has interesting challenges for the basic communication course -- from the point of view of the department administrator, university administration, the course director, and the faculty in the course. For those of us interested in the basic communication course, Boyer's and the Commission's new work will be an appropriate focal point for a future panel during an SCA conference.

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